



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Office of the Mayor
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JAMES F. KENNEY
Mayor

August 31, 2021

Re: Safe Staffing

Dear Secretary Beam:

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to nursing home workers and residents. Deaths in nursing homes make up nearly 30 percent of overall national COVID-19 fatalities. Early in the pandemic nursing homes accounted for nearly 70 percent of Pennsylvania COVID-19 related deaths. This tragedy which has unfolded in Philadelphia's nursing homes reveals profound weaknesses in the long-term care system, which is symptomatic of issues that predate the pandemic.

I am writing in support of the Department of Health's proposed nursing home regulations, which would require a minimum of 4.1 hours of resident care per day in every skilled nursing facility in Pennsylvania. Increasing direct care hours puts resources where they should be, in the front lines of care. The Pennsylvania Department of Health reports 7,192 nursing home beds in Philadelphia. Each one of those beds is a person who deserves to be cared for and to live in dignity. Research has shown that adequate staffing has led to fewer infections, fewer pressure ulcers, fewer falls, reduced emergency room visits and increased physical and mental health in residents. Safer staffing also means safer, manageable working conditions for nursing home workers and better staff retention, an issue that has plagued this industry for decades.

Over 13,000 of Pennsylvania's most vulnerable residents have died in our nursing homes due to COVID-19. It is critical for state and local government to step up. The 4.1 hours of care has been recommended by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) since 2001 as standard needed to maintain quality of care. I applaud the Department's decision to call for 4.1 hours of

care per resident-day, and I urge the Department to maintain this standard of care in its final regulations.

Regulations requiring safe staffing are the first step in our ongoing work to protect the exponentially growing number of aging in our communities, and I join advocates across my state in support of the Department's proposal to implement 4.1 staffing as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James F. Kenney". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

James F. Kenney
Mayor